



MAINE GAY TASK FORCE NEWSLETTER

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The beginning of September saw more than just the post-Labor Day exodus of "them thar outta-staters." It also heralded the opening of the Red Carpet Club in Old Orchard Beach as a Gay-oriented establishment.

The physical layout is a two-level club and motel. The facilities include the upstairs area: tables, juke, pin games, color TV and bar. Downstairs are tables, booths, a hardwood dance floor (20'x18'), emcee with records and another bar. For those who wish to avoid the long drive home apres alcohol, the motel is there. Although open to all, the motel is primarily for Gays; non-Gays have enough other places to go in town.

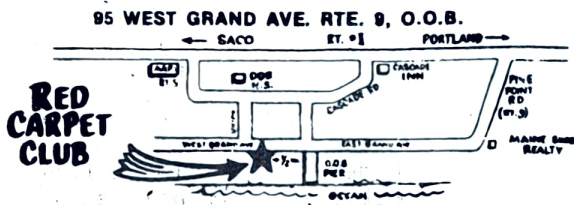
Currently, the Red Carpet Club is open downstairs only on the weekend -- Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. The upstairs is open the rest of the week; upon

request, the owner will gladly show the downstairs area. If the demand is there, in the future the downstairs area will be open more often.

Meet and talk with Denis, the owner--he wants to meet everyone--and you get an idea of the direction in which he wants the Club to go. The law of supply and demand will determine the extent to which his plans are realized. Simply stated, if the Gay community will patronize the Club, it will grow--expand--to (probably) the best club north of Boston. (No one said this article would be completely objective.)



DAY BAR-GAME ROOM
BAND STARTS AT 9:00



an added attraction

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# BREAKFAST

★ SERVED ★  
DAILY ★  
FROM 1<sup>am</sup>

# RED CARPET CLUB (cont.):

The guiding principle is "if the demand's there, we'll do it." Some of the ideas Denis has for the Club include: a light show downstairs, after-closing breakfast (1 a.m. to 5 a.m.), having the first floor of the motel open during the winter, a taxi service from Portland to O.O.B., being open Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and a stand-up bar area fairly close to the dance floor. Suggestions of ways to improve the facilities are welcome. According to Denis, he will "be more than glad to make these changes." He wants to have a "good, clean environment" and "good service," thereby maintaining a good, clean, hassle-free place for Gays to go and enjoy themselves. And, contrary to the rest of Old Orchard Beach, the Red Carpet Club will not roll up into a cozy cocoon of snow-covered inactivity during the coming winter months.

The first major project for the Red Carpet Club will be a Halloween contest, complete with flowers and trophies. This will take place in the downstairs lounge. Denis didn't go into much detail, but I expect it will be a big show, with a lot of 'local talent.'

So far, there hasn't been any adverse community reaction to the opening of the Club as a 'Gay mecca.' Denis doesn't "anticipate any problems; haven't had any yet." He is very optimistic about the success of the Red Carpet as a Gay club, with no hassles from the local gendarmes or the area residents. With our patronage, good behavior and suggestions for improvements, he just might be right!

The Red Carpet Club is referred to as a 'club' by Denis. He feels that by calling it a 'club' rather than a 'bar,' there is a better connotation. To him, 'bar' conjures up an image of drafts and stand-up bars, while 'club' refers to the operation he has going in O.O.B.--seating, music, liquors as well as beer. An entirely different atmosphere than a bar.

Denis feels that getting to know people, on a first-name basis, is important in building a good relationship with the clientele. He has been upstairs in the Baghdad Lounge every evening, with a ready smile and handshake, meeting everyone who enters. He makes you feel at ease there, shows you around the downstairs area, and practices his drink-mixing technique with your order.

Speaking of drinks, the prices are on a par with those around the Boston area. A draft runs 75¢, one-liquor drinks are \$1.15,

two-liquor drinks are \$1.75 and, for us non-drinkers, the soda is 50¢. So far, most of the people who have been there have gone for the mixed drinks, not the beer. There's also a price differential, as is usually the case (at least in the places I've been); downstairs, with the emcee and dancing is a little more expensive than upstairs. But not bad.

Although the advertising so far has been by word-of-mouth, business is picking up. Cards are being printed to use as one means of more advertising. Denis has a good feeling toward the Gays who have been there: "I find the Gays are very mellow, very receptive to [my] establishment. And they seem to know one another too. Makes it a real tight house, more enjoyable... fewer problems. More of a family situation."

Also, there is no discrimination towards either Gays or non-Gays. Non-Gays are welcome to come in, drink, dance. And, if they can't handle being in a Gay club, they also have the option of leaving. "Just accept people for what they are."

There are "no involvements with the police department" either. "We take care of our own problems." There have been no hassles from the police; the general feeling is that Denis is running a good, clean place -- "that's the way we want it." And, evidently, that's the way the cops want it too.

--Karen Bye

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## GAY GROUP AT POGO U.

The University of Maine at Portland/Gorham has finally acquired a Gay students' group of its very own. Initiated by Steve Leo and Stan Fortuna, who are by coincidence also veteran MGTFF activists, the new group will hold its first meeting on October 2nd, at which it will be formally christened.

The purposes of this group will be "to provide a place where Gay people on campus can meet in a positive atmosphere; to educate Gay people and the general public about the nature of homosexuality; and to combat the persecution of and discrimination against Gay people." Also the group will sponsor Gay social activities on campus, including dances and Symposium III in the spring.

For further details, contact either the MGTFF or the Student Activities Board on campus.

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Special thanx to Warren for help with the last issue.....

-3-

VISITORS DESCRIBE GAY BRITAIN, Part 2  
by Tom Hurley

Gays and British Society

The decriminalization of sexual acts between consenting adults has apparently not done much to eradicate homophobic attitudes in Britain. The law sets the age of consent at 21, and stipulates that sexual acts be performed in private and that only two people be involved. "Of course, no one takes any notice of the law," said John, but he quickly remembered that a few of his friends have been arrested for sex offenses. Police harassment outside Gay pubs continues to be a very big problem, with police "moving along" clientele and even beating them up.

Curiously, though, John and Dennis did not think British police in general have a vendetta against Gays. Dennis commented, "You get individual policemen who have perhaps got a particular dislike of Gays. But I think that on the whole the police force, as in most things in England, is fairly noncommittal. It tends to sort of administer the law with impartiality. It doesn't really permit itself to have any dislikes or likes. Just particular policemen."

Whatever the attitude of the police, British society tends to be rather restrained in expressing its homophobia, according to Dennis and John. "Americans, I think, are more demonstrative if they dislike a Gay," said Dennis. "But in England, it's the English reserve. You wouldn't say anything directly because you'd make a scene, and an Englishman will not make a scene. So he probably wouldn't say a thing." "A working class Englishman would tell you you're a faggot," John added.

John's comment brought up the question of class. Paul Goodman said that homosexuality is a great leveler of classes, and I wondered if this were true in Britain, where class distinctions are marked more obviously than in the United States. Although they live in a middle-class neighborhood, Dennis and John felt their circle of friends cut across class lines: "I work in a factory, you see," John explained. "But most of my friends -- I mean, they start with very upper-class people and then go down to very working-class people and there doesn't seem to be any class distinction. Which is a nice thing. It's a very classless society of Gays." Had he been straight, John felt, class barriers would have limited his relationships.

Dennis told a story that illustrates how he handles the everyday homophobia of his co-workers (and incidentally illustrates one difference between the Queen's English and American):

When I was in a factory, I was much campier than I am now. I used to wear really flamboy-

ant clothes, really outrageous stuff. I used to work upstairs. And I'd walk up these stairs to where I used to work, this big office upstairs. And I'd walk through where the printers were and it's a fairly factory-type atmosphere. And they'd always whistle and, you know, cheer and things like that. And it never used to worry me. They used to send me up. And I'd turn around and send them up back.

Tom: "Send them up?"

John: Yeah, send them up. That means -- you know what "taking the piss" is?

Dennis: They'd whistle, you know...

John: Making fun of you. That's what sending up is.

Dennis: I'd turn around at the top of the stairs and blow 'em all a kiss, you know. I used to like that.

While Britain has enacted laws protecting the civil rights of women, no laws specifically prevents discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. Dennis felt British homophobic discrimination was more subtle than in America: "Very few people will admit to disliking you because you're Gay. They'll give you some other reason. And it gets very hard to prove that they're getting at you because you're Gay." John, however, argued that anti-Gay discrimination is not a big problem: "I don't think Gays are discriminated against so much as they were. In flats -- people would prefer to have Gays in flats because they usually pay their rents better. They usually are better tenants. I mean, they usually keep the place pretty neat."

Whatever the form and degree of homophobia in Britain, there are signs that attitudes toward Gays are improving. "I think you can see the changes in England," Dennis argued. "I mean, you've got a commercial radio station opened up and on it they do so much Gay stuff. They talk about Gay pubs, interesting Gays -- it wasn't very interesting, but at least they're trying. And they've got a woman whom you can

(continued on page 11)

(The following is the first of two parts. Part 2 will be published in the November issue.)

THE CUMBERLAND COUNTY CURMUDGEON  
S.W. Henderson

The Gay Person's Guide to Social Security

Part I: Retirement Benefits

There comes a time in every Gay person's life when, hopefully, one lives long enough to collect Social Security. That being so, Yours Truly thinks it appropriate to share her recently-acquired knowledge of the subject in the hope that her Gay brothers and sisters may benefit therefrom. What makes Gay people a special case when dealing with Social Security is the fact that, for all intents and purposes, same-sex marriages are not legally recognized. This means that, in the eyes of the Social Security Administration, a Gay couple is two individuals. This is bad news in some cases and good news in others.

The part where we lose is survivors' benefits. Your lover can't collect on your Social Security after you shuffle off this mortal coil. This is a real bummer if your lover didn't have enough of her/his own Social Security credits to collect, or if the survivor's benefit would have been more than the lover's own benefit. However, in most Gay couples, both the members work for pay.

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Another Sunday.

They've long since lost, regained and lost  
again their spiritual programing.  
Now they're days for finding myself --  
to find myself in someone else.  
But when there's no one there to look into --  
What then?  
I look for myself in books, places,  
strangers faces.  
It's easier to find yourself elsewhere  
but feels better to find yourself in  
someone else.

--Phil

Hence, at age 65, they collect two individual's benefits.

On retirement benefits, which is what most people mean when they say "Social Security", we come out about even with heterosexuals, or sometimes better off. This is because, again, both members of a Gay couple work. When you are eligible for Social Security, both in your own right and on your spouse's account, they give you whichever benefit is bigger, but not both. A person's own benefit is generally bigger than a spouse's benefit, so a Gay couple where both members worked comes out better than a non-Gay couple where one member stayed at home. NOTE: At one time, a woman could collect on her husband's account, but a man could not collect on his wife's unless he was her dependent. A recent court decision changed this. Now a man can collect on his wife's account if it will give him more money than his own, without having to prove dependency. Feminism marches on!

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Maine Gay Task Force Coordinators:

Communications: Wendy Ashley, Stephen Leo  
Media: Stan Fortuna, Deborah Johnsen  
Newsletter: Karen Bye, Tom Hurley  
Political: Peter Prizer, Anne Garland  
Speakers' Bureau: Susan Breeding, Tim Bouffard

# LETTERS ~

Dear M.G.T.F.,

I have just received the August newsletter, well documented with plaintive and exhausted cries for help and response. I don't blame you. You deserve a vacation. But I will miss not having another newsletter until October.

The problem is, of course, that writers never get sufficient response, and if a chorus of angels fluttered down in grateful ecstasy over every newsletter, you would immediately complain because the devil didn't like it. Not for nothing are writers booze hounds, wife beaters, suicides, and general malcontents. But be encouraged; you are being heard.

I began subscribing to the newsletter last winter when I spotted your ad in the Maine Times. At the time my lover and I were living in Rhode Island and planning to move to Maine. We had, of course, no idea what gay life, tolerance levels, etc., would be like in such a rural part of New England, and while we had every confidence in our relationship, the very existence of your group was reassuring. It quelled that awful fear most of us surely had when as children we first thought, "My God, I'm the only one in the world."

And then when we moved to this beautiful area, our nearest neighbours down the beach turned out to be two gay women, kind and fascinating people, one of whom worked for "Shakespeare and Co." in Paris in the twenties and was involved with the original publication of Joyce's "Ulysses." Luck has been running high for us since we moved here in many ways, but the point is that my example is probably very typical of many of your readers. Your newsletter provides a very profound service regardless of its content. As to the content: I find it generally of interest, sometimes funny, and downright important in terms of information about legislation and the like.

I was delighted and impressed with the five people who appeared on the recent television "Talk Back" program. The responses to questions were fresh, honest and unabashedly direct. But more important was the basic human decency and self-confidence, the unspoken element, that radiated from the screen. Loud and clear it said, We are people as diverse and indefinable and complicated as any other group of people. But, of course, that is the next step when the word "gay" will be an unnecessary as it is silly now. Heterosexual

people neither do nor have to go around thinking "I am a heterosexual." For the time being, at any rate, it is probably important for us to say "We are homosexuals." The final goal of your newsletter will be its obsolescence. Meanwhile, thank you for your work, and my congratulations.

I have an electric Smith Corona portable typewriter you may have if you can figure out how to get it from here to Portland without my driving for four hours....

Hugo

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Dear friends of Maine,

Your August issue was sent to me by a friend, at my request, and I've read it with great interest. If you provide subscriptions without charge for prisoners, I'd appreciate being placed on your mailing list. Copies will be passed on to others equally interested, and we'll all say nice things about you to friends more likely than we to subscribe.

In my case you'll have a paid subscription, too, as soon as I'm out of my present situation. I'm interested in what's going on everywhere, for one thing; and, as a former publisher and publication consultant, I have a professional interest in journals like yours.

I particularly enjoyed Karen Bye's plea for help with shitwork and new material. It's a familiar story; and, though Karen tells it well and with good humor, my enjoyment stemmed largely from its evocation of nostalgia. I've been there all too many times. I suspect, in fact, Karen may have to look forward to more of the same. Every young publication -- or young organization, for that matter -- depends for its continuing existence on the loving labors of a few who make the sacrifice of time and freedom they could use for fun and personal gain to do shitwork for the group -- because no one else seems capable or willing, and because they think somehow it's worth it. They're right about the latter. And probably about the former as well. There seems to be no solution except to bitch a lot and hope that occasionally one more warm body will join the effort. (It's rarely more than one at a time, regardless of the need, and then it's lucky if he or she sticks around for more than one issue.)

Karen's fears that the Newsletter will become stale, or that there'll be too little variety of style and content, are disproved by the pre-

(Continued on page 6)

# LETTERS (con't):

sent issue. The book is brightly written, articles are suitably varied (and mercifully short), and there are few flaws in spelling or grammar. (That last may sound like little, but don't you believe it. Karen deserves a tremendous cheer for what she's accomplished there, if for nothing else. Few young publications are so free of errata as MGTFN; and the presence of such flaws provides problems even in some otherwise professional publications. I've just written a critique of an expensively-produced, otherwise literate -- indeed, college-campus produced -- book in which proofing errors averaged more than four to the page. And one paper which describes itself as "intellectual" is so error-prone that I don't dare even count!)

My biggest praise for Karen's piece, though, results from her suggestion that "everything in the Newsletter doesn't have to do with Gayness." Well said! Would that more editors -- and more organizations -- come to that realization. The preoccupation with Coming Out, with public statements and demonstrations, with participation in Gay events and the like are too common in the gay press. Most of us are already too prone to concern with things gay, and we could do with more from the press that would foster our development of ourselves as well-rounded individuals. It may prove, in fact, that the most harmful side-effect of the whole gay movement is that people will be so busy being gay that they don't have time to be anything else.

One of the problems is that we're all too willing to divide the world into "gay" and "straight," forgetting that these words are -- or should be -- convenient shorthand for individuals at one end or the other of Dr. Kinsey's famous scale. Almost thirty years ago, Kinsey pointed out that few males are either exclusively homosexual or exclusively heterosexual, and that their experience places most at a midpoint on a continuum. (Not even the same midpoint at all times, in fact; everyone's position changes as his experience expands.) We're still classifying people, though; and not content with the straight world's calling us "different," we have to call attention to the same misconception.

I'm much more interested in establishing the right of everyone to any place on that scale than I am in "gay" rights, for instance. I think the right of "heterosexuals" to participate in gay experi-

ences may be more important than that of gay people to do what they please in bed. And I think I'd feel better about the encouragement of the coming-out process if it consisted of the individual's announcing that he or she didn't intend to limit his or her experience to either sex.

As founder of The Norman Foundation and The Odyssey Foundation, organizations that have provided self-development opportunities through travel programs, I'm devoted to working with young people towards goals of personal excellence as human beings, regardless of their position on the Kinsey scale. In fact, I encourage their ranging freely in their experience rather than seeking too soon to find a spot and rigidly sticking to it. Rigidity may be the worst danger we face.

So, more power to Karen with her "possibilities are endless" approach. They are indeed.

Aware that this may wind up in an "open-letter format," I'd like to add just a bit about my present situation and urgent need: I've been held in Cook County Jail, Chicago, awaiting trial, for almost two years on bail that made my release impossible. A few days ago, the Illinois Appellate Court finally ordered that bail reduced by two-thirds; so I am now involved in a crash program to raise \$5000 to get out of jail.

Though charges shouldn't make any difference, there's no great secret about them: I'm accused of sexual involvement with teen-agers in a Chicago suburb in the fall of 1973. There's no violence, force, threat or danger alleged, and considerable disagreement between police and those allegedly involved about what, if anything, is supposed to have occurred. Proving my innocence is a virtual certainty if I'm able to make bail and appear in court as a free person with a competent attorney. It's damnably difficult otherwise; and the legal battle is taking so long that my guilt or innocence may be academic -- I will have served a sentence before I ever get to trial.

So I welcome contributions from those able to make them. (Only money orders may be sent to me at the jail, incidentally, but checks may be mailed to John Norman Defense Fund, 3795 Mission Blvd., San Diego, CA 92109.) And correspondence from anyone, contributor or not, is welcome -- it will be answered.

John Norman 7309504 C-1  
2600 S. California Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60608

(more letters on page 7)

-7-

up FRONT RUNNER, and that is a pity.  
Enclosed is a check for renewal  
of my subscription.

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## PLEDGES

Okay, Gang. Those of you who have made pledges of time and energy, and who have met those obligations, THANK YOU from the depths of our lavender hearts. Those of you who have made -- and met -- your pledges of financial assistance, a great big THANKS to you also. Now, for the rest of the world, we at the Task Force need YOU. NOW.

This is the first, and probably the last, time we are going to harass you about pledges. We barely paid the rent this month, and will not make next month's rent (not to mention the phone bill) unless y'all get it together enough to send in some long green. If you have made a pledge and don't have it, that's okay. But those who have it to spare and are hoarding it, gripe my ass. There are few enough of us who are willing to do the up-front, talking-to-the-media type stuff without having to do the fund-raising for this outfit also. We're not asking everyone to clean out their mattresses; a small contribution from each one who reads this is sufficient. And it won't hurt at all. Honest.

We don't want to give up the office and phone; both are here to serve the Gay community...YOU. But unless things start happening, that's what will have to happen. And, keep those cards and letters comin'....

Karen Bye

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## APOLOGY

To those of you who have called  
or dropped into the office when no  
one has been there...

The lack of office staffing is readily apparent. Sorry for the inconvenience it has caused various of you. However, if you will kindly read the preceding article, you will find the reasons. In addition to turning out this rag, staffing the office (only occasionally, I know), and figuring out how to pay the rent, we are also holding down full-time jobs. Can't be in two places at once, or so I've been told. Hopefully, in the (near) future, staffing will get onto a more regular schedule.

(Continued on page 11)

Thanks to the NEWSLETTER I am kept abreast of what's happening Down East, but, more importantly, I enjoy what you have to say about the vic

Vis a vis information, if I hadn't followed your stories on the pickets of certain Ogunquit establishments, I might have blundered into an oppressive atmosphere when I was there Saturday evening. However, we avoided Valerie's and asked before we dined at Anabel's whether they welcomed gay persons and whether same-sex couples could dance there. We were assured on both counts, by a waiter and a waitress, at least one of whom was gay and simpatico. As we were headed back to New Hampshire, we did not test their sincerity regarding the dancing, but I intend to recommend the place in my next column (Issue #11) of NEWSWEST, because at least their attitude toward us seemed right on. Is that ill-advised or sound?

The review of FRONT RUNNER was one of two I have read in the gay press which reflected a gay consciousness. THE ADVOCATE reviews have totally missed the point so well brought out by John Frank; in fact, that right-swinging, conservative, hetero-imitative paper has done as much to push that silly straight romance as any other publication in the country. How encouraging it is to know there are still articulate gay writers working from the Gay Perspective contributing to what there is of the gay press and not going over to The Man every time we make some progress such as your community has made in Maine! We are not, after all, "respectable" in the eyes of the straight world, and it is folly to seek such status -- even the "acceptance" which TIME recently referred to as our goal as emerging peoples. Articles like the one by Brother John point out the struggle is for a gay identity and surely will make gay persons think before they swallow something dangerously Old Order like Ms. Patricia Nell Warren's reactionary polemic. To me it was/is a cross between something in a "ladies" magazine and THAT CERTAIN SUMMER, another over-praised and even harmful distortion of the gay lifestyle. Harmful because gay persons applauded it, so happy were they to be tossed a slice of the straight pie, without thinking what it was saying: Gay love is permissible if you're monogamous, productive by straight standards, and can pass muster at the country club. They have also been eating

-8-  
MGTF MEETING MINUTES  
September 7, 1975  
Susan Henderson, Chairperson  
Tom Hurley, Scribe

The meeting was convened at 1:25 p.m. with 16 persons present. The next meeting will be October 5 at 1:00 p.m., in the office. Stephen Leo will chair and Karen Bye will take notes.

Finances: Stan Fortuna reported a balance of \$90.14 in the MGTF account; \$9.46 in the MGTFN account. The most recent dance brought in \$41.00.

MGTF at Thomaston: Susan Henderson read a letter from some Gay prisoners at the Maine State Prison at Thomaston asking about starting an MGTF chapter there. The Task Force agreed to arrange a meeting with the prisoners. Susan has a list of those people interested, and will coordinate the endeavor.

New Gay Group: Stephen Leo, Stan, and other Gay students at the University of Maine, Portland/Gorham will be forming a Gay campus organization.

Incorporation: Robert Calkins read a draft of the papers for incorporation of the MGTF. After brief discussion, the draft was approved by those at the meeting. Robert and Peter Prizer will have the papers ready for signing by the next meeting.

Phone Problems: There is a strong possibility that the MGTF phone is being tapped. Karen recommended we keep a strict record of all phone irregularities (clicks, echo, etc.) and advised everyone to be careful what she/he says on the phone.

Dances: Stan pointed out that the dances require people to clean up after the ball is over as well as before. Stephen requested that

people please keep their hands off the stereo system. In view of the demise of Lambda and the Brunswick Gay Women's Group, the MGTF will henceforth sponsor the dances. Dances may soon be held in Portland, but will, until further notice, continue in Brunswick.

Office Staffing: We still need volunteers to staff the office at night (7:30 - 9:30).

Friday Rap Group: Rap groups will resume on Friday, September 19, at 8:00 p.m., at the office.

WBLM Radio Show: We have been offered a weekly 15-minute radio show by WBLM in Lewiston. We need four radio scripts to begin with; content and structure are up to us. A meeting to set up this show was set for 12 noon on Thursday, September 11, at the office.

SCAR Petition: Karen passed around a SCAR petition to end solitary confinement in prisons, and encouraged everyone to sign it.

MCHS Report: Members who attended the August 25 meeting of the Maine Council on Human Services reported that a morning session on Gay adolescents, with Linda Graham of Boston's "Project Lambda," was very successful. The afternoon workshop on homophobia was over-attended by Gays and underattended by others. Lunch was okay, and the children had a great time.

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*5-11 - more on page 11...*

THE MGTFN invites readers to use its pages for brief ads and notices. Ads are free and will be run for two issues unless you indicate otherwise. The Newsletter reserves the right to reject or edit ads and notices; the Newsletter does not accept sex ads.

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WARNING: A homophobe with a gun is on the loose around the Augusta rest area on I-95 southbound. Several people have been attacked. BE CAREFUL!

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BANGOR AREA people who want to reactivate Gay Support and Action write to P.O. Box 110, Bangor, ME 04401. We need a group in this area.

A MAN wants to correspond with Gay people in and around Maine. Write: D.B.C., Box 213, Dryden, ME 04225.

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SUBSCRIBE TO THE MGTF NEWSLETTER, box 4542, Portland, ME 04112. One year (12 issues+), \$4. Sent first class in plain envelope.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
Town/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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GAY RAP GROUP every Friday night at 8, MGTF office, 193 Middle St., Portland. If door is locked, call 773-5530. Everyone welcome.

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WOMEN'S COUNSELING SERVICE: 13 Main St., Topsham, ME. Tel: 729-4561.

MEN'S LIBERATION: A NEW DEFINITION OF MASCULINITY, by Jack NicholsTHE MALE MACHINE, by Marc Feigen Fasteau

Historically, women have been told by men who they are. That men also tell other men who they are is one of the messages of the men's liberation movement. Male human beings become men by accepting the strict programming implied in Marc Feigen Fasteau's guiding metaphor, the male machine: be in command, don't show emotion, compete intellectually and physically, love women and sire children, like but do not love men, suffer no limits on individuality. Failure to do these things--that is, to act humanly--brings contempt from others and self-hatred. Male machines gain an identity of sorts but are often harmed, if not destroyed, as human beings. These two books, products of men's growing awareness that the patriarchy controls the patriarchs as well as the concubines, explain how men might find better ways to live.

These books, despite some problems I'll get into in a moment, should interest Gay men. We are in a unique position: growing up, we knew we were not the men we were supposed to be, and yet as men we picked up much of the sexist and inhuman conditioning straight men experience. Gay men in business, in the bar, in bed, can be as competitive, uncaring and ruggedly individual as straight men. We pick up our sexism so easily we don't even realize it's there--"I mean, if you're not having sex with women, what's the problem?" Many Gay men, it is true, see the male taboos for the cultural balderdash they are, but many do not. Even if we sense that all is not well in our lives, we might not realize how male stereotypes contribute to our malaise. For these reasons, Nichols' and Fasteau's books are useful reading for Gay men.

Nichols begins with a four-chapter exposition of his central idea: men are constrained because they tend to rely on intellect and rationality and suppress their feelings and intuition. He argues for an androgynous mind that perceives through both feeling and intellect, that is open to the variables of experience rather than closed by logic and structures, that is passive as well as active. If all this sounds like an old east-west dichotomy, it is. In some ways, Men's Liberation is in the tradition of The Greening of America and The Making of a Counter-Culture. Nichols' gurus are Lao Tzu and Whitman; he quotes them as gleefully as Billy Graham quotes scripture. What's new here is the connection between objectivity and the male stereotype. What's particularly reminiscent of the counter-culture is Nichols' triumphant tone: as soon as men reform their ways, what a bright, bright world this will be. Would that the world were that easy to change. Wasn't one of the lessons of the sixties that naive, single-answer approaches to revol-

ution wouldn't work? The book goes on for a total of twenty-one chapters to topics like competition, violence, politics, fatherhood, friendship, the body, and contains some provocative thoughts on aggression as a male instinct (he doesn't believe it is) and play as a way of dealing with the world (he's for it).

The Male Machine covers much the same ground in fewer chapters, but Fasteau's tone is less apocalyptic than Nichols'. One chapter, a thorough indictment of the masculine rhetoric and assumptions of the American involvement in Vietnam, is exceptionally good. Fasteau also combines observations about men with personal experiences. He tells us about the terrifying war games he played with other boys, bland afternoons with other men where TV or sports blocked communication, learning to hear--really hear--his wife talk about her experience.

Both books, however, are oriented toward heterosexual men. I suppose that reflects the current men's movement, but the orientation offers little comfort for the Gay man who is trying to deal with being a man. While we share many problems with straight men, our situation is not quite the same, and the differences are significant. Where do we turn for a discussion of our bedroom politics, of how being told we're not "men" sometimes makes us more macho, of the sexual tension that seems to attend any encounter between Gay men, of effeminacy, of our dealings with women, of our relations with straight men? We are in these books, but barely. In his last chapter, "Androgyny," Fasteau envisions a society where more men accept "homosexual activity" (cold phrase; who would think it might involve love) than do now, but Fasteau doesn't see himself expressing affection sexually for his male friends. In fact, his model for androgyny is overwhelmingly

(continued on page 10)

## BOOK REVIEW (con'tt):

heterosexual: right now, he says, "homosexual activity" places one in a "separate caste" while at the same time the aggressive masculine image inhibits some men so much that they "take refuge in the alternative of homosexuality." With the acceptance of homosexuality and the disappearance of the tough macho image, Fasteau concludes, exclusively homosexual men will start having relationships with women. So, on the one hand, homosexuality is a stigmatized caste; on the other, we're eager to be stigmatized! Fasteau is honest about his own feelings, but confused. He hasn't done all his homework on the genesis of homosexuality; he's talking about tolerance, not acceptance. He seems very uncomfortable with Gayness.

Nichols' views on homosexuality are better. Let people act on their feelings, make love with whomever they will--forget norms entirely. But Nichols limits his remarks on Gayness to one chapter ("Friendship") and directs his remarks to the heterosexual male. We still come across as outsiders. Though Nichols' treatment is sympathetic, we're as "controversial" here as in the recent TIME cover story.

Anyone familiar with Nichols may be not a little surprised at his closety approach. The biographical blurb doesn't tell you that he co-founded the D.C. Mattachine Society and co-authored two books on Gay life with his late lover, Lige Clarke. The books are very, very Gay. It may be that Nichols no longer thinks of himself as Gay--that he dislikes labels, that he no longer has sex only with men, whatever--but for one who talks so freely about freedom to be who you are, why camouflage one's past? It may be, too, that Nichols and Penguin decided heterosexual men would be reluctant to read a faggot on men's liberation, and so Nichols has gone into the closet for rhetorical purposes. I would simply argue that honesty about one's relevant past is a powerful rhetorical tool. Straight men are big boys; they'll survive the shock.

Fasteau devotes five chapters specifically to men-women relationships. Nichols deals with men and women in three chapters, though an additional one, "Coupling," talks about monogamy (by implication, Gay as well as straight; I give Nichols credit for creating a less-sexist word than "marriage"). But Fasteau talks most often about arrangements within marriage and the family. Nichols, more critical of these structures, falls short

of confronting men with the very real oppression women--as women--experience each day. I cannot avoid the suspicion that these books could be used to make things more comfortable for men while allowing our male supremacist society to continue riding roughshod over the lives of women. Sexism cuts both ways, but one edge is sharper. Part of men's liberation, I think, ought to be liberation from power itself, and men will not even begin to consider giving up their birthright unless they understand how insidiously our male-oriented society works against the women around them. In any treatment of men's liberation, therefore, I'd like to see a frank feminist analysis of the way society works. Both Fasteau and Nichols move in this direction, but Fasteau's preoccupation with marriage prevents him from seeing the sexist nature of the institution. And I have serious doubts whether Nichols really feels the experience of women when he objects to the use of the terms "sexist" and "oppressor," and says that men could as well call some women oppressors. Women find these words useful to clarify their situation, and men should think twice before comparing their domination by individual "manipulative ladies" to the power of the patriarchy. Nichols knows this, but his silly objection obscures a complicated but crucial point.

I guess we'll have to wait for a book on men's liberation by and for faggots. I hope whoever writes it has a feminist awareness, and knows when to hold men's hands and when to box our ears. In the meantime, Gay men can, by estimating, learn from Nichols and Fasteau. Despite my quarrels with them, I learned about myself from these books--what more can I say? But don't stop here, dear brothers. There's lots more being written and lots more being done--college courses, men's groups, men's newsletters.\* Form a men's group with your friends. Listen to the women around you. Read feminist works. Then go out and write the book I'm dying to read.

\*One of which is the Men's Awareness Network: A Newsletter, which lists all sorts of resources. Send \$1 to Knoxville Men's Resource Center, P.O. Box 8060, U.T. Station, Knoxville, Tenn. 37916.

--Tom Hurley

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This issue is Vol. 2, No. 9 -- for the month of October, 1975.

# GAY BRITAIN (con't):

Phone on one night for specifically Gay problems. And people phone in and say 'my lover's run off' and she gives the advice -- 'pull yourself together and go find another man.' Actually the advice is quite reasonable. There's no censure."

## American Machismo

I asked the British pair what they noticed particularly about American Gay life. Although they admitted their experience was limited pretty much to Portland, they were struck by a strong 'masculine image' projected by most Gay men they've met here. As John explained, "There are less outwardly feminine men. What we really mean is that men seem to be very worried about how they look and how they move and they basically try to be very sort of masculine." Dennis: "Yes. There's all this masculine image, all the time." John: "And I think it's very bad. A lot of men should try to get into not acting as men all the time. As they grow up, acting as they want to." "There seems to be a dislike of anything camp by Gays," said Dennis. Both felt that American fashions and taste reflected American machismo. In England, even working-class Gay men dress in 'softer' fashions than they've seen in the United States.

I remarked that a lot of American men, straight as well as Gay, were loosening up. Male dress in America is decidedly 'softer' than it was ten years ago, although I didn't feel this necessarily meant that men are seriously re-thinking sexual stereotypes. John concurred: "You want to get them to look at themselves and say, 'Look, you're dressing up.' I mean, ten years ago you'd consider this very feminine. Why is it different now? Can't you sort of think more positively about things like this?"

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## APOLOGY...

If any of you can (and WILL) finance a full-time office staffer, PLEASE DO. Not only will that person appreciate it, but I think a lot of others will also. THANKS.

--Karen Bye

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MAINE FEMINIST HEALTH PROJECT, an open collective of women from around the state, is looking for new members. Slide shows and self-exam demonstrations available to groups of interested

-11- women. Call 772-7673 (Portland) or 926-4343 (New Gloucester).

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## RAPE CRISIS CENTER Meetings:

Oct. 13 - General meeting; discussion of resumes and training sessions.

Oct. 28 - Rap group for counselors. Both at 7:30 at the Public Safety building.

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The following prisoners need outside support. Write to them with news and strength:

Jessie Anderson #30990  
P.O. Box 747 12-3217  
Starke, FLA 32091

Jimmy Hall #006827  
P.O. Box 747 K-1-N-16, East Unit  
Starke, FLA 32091

Glen Ratliff #139 469  
P.O. Box 69  
London, Ohio 43140

Rudolph Robinson #030878  
P.O. Box 747 P-2-N-2  
Starke, FLA 32091

Jimmy Shrider #414-969  
P.O. Box 69  
London, Ohio 43140

George Ware #034451  
P.O. Box 747 K-1-N-6  
Starke, FLA 32091

Johnny Williams #162-212  
P.O. Box 747  
Starke, FLA 32091

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U. MAINE/ORONO GAYS: The Wilde-Stein Club has started up for this academic year. Contact the W-S office in the Memorial Union, or call 581-2571.

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NEW HAMPSHIRE DOB: For info write: Occupant, Box 137, Northwood, N.H. 03261. Do not use "gay" on mail to this group.

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## ATTENTION LESBIAN SEPARATISTS!

Dyke, a Lesbian separatist quarterly, will commence publication this fall. Charter subscriptions: \$5 until Nov. 30; \$8 thereafter. All topics of interest to Dykes covered. Everyone who works for Dyke will be paid; regular correspondents will receive free subs as payment. Write: Tomato Publications, 70 Barrow St., NYC 10014, Room 1R.

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PORTLAND WOMEN'S CENTER: 388 Fore St., Tel: 773-9864.

For those of you who have requested it (& everyone else, too), here are directions to the dances held in Brunswick:

**FROM PORTLAND:** Take 295/95/Whatever It's Called to Brunswick. Go gaily forward onto the one-way section (Pleasant St.). Cross the tracks; go through the light. Look for the white church on your right (next to the Greyhound stop and sorta across from the post office). You're there!

**FROM BANGOR:** Find Brunswick (either Rt. 1 or Rt. 201). Take the Maine St. exit; left onto Maine to the 3<sup>rd</sup> right (Cumberland). Then the 1<sup>st</sup> left (Union); left at the light (Pleasant).

-OR-

At the yellow flasher (pardon the expression!) at the intersection of Mill and Pleasant (Rts. 1 & 95), take the left onto Pleasant and bogie along to the directions given above.

See y'all at the dances!!

